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UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Prentice Computer Centre
NEWSLETTER

authorization: Director of the Prentice Computer Centre

1 SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE

Our record over the last month has not been as good as we would like. We installed a new disk controller and there is a transient problem which is very difficult to pin down. We have taken it out of service to carry out further checking off-line. The growth in the amount of work has caused further problems placing strain on our disk structure and the operating system in total. Our usually reliable printer has also been troublesome lately.

We do apologise for any inconvenience. I guess all users would appreciate that we would rather not have the problems either.

2. LOW PRIORITY SERVICE

The lower priority service was provided to allow users the advantage of lower prices but at a lower standard of service. For example, priority 1-2 work (at quarter rate) only provided for up to a weekly turnaround. In practice we have tried to give as good a service as we can within the resources available and turnaround has in general been far better than the advertised service. However, human nature being what it is, users have accepted the past grade of service as the norm and many are now complaining when they do not receive priority 1-2 work back almost immediately after 2100 hours. It would be appreciated, therefore, if users would please note the grades of service applicable to each priority and charge rate. Depending on workload we endeavour to provide as good a response as we can within the capacity available. We believe it would not be in the user's interest to hold back work purely to meet our response standards. We have, therefore, shown some guidelines that are applicable under current workload conditions for small to medium size jobs.

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<u>PRIORITY</u>	<u>RATE</u>	<u>STANDARD RESPONSE</u>	<u>RESPONSE GUIDELINES</u> <u>CURRENT WORKLOAD*</u>
1 & 2	$\frac{1}{4}$ internal	Up to a week	Work submitted up to 2200 hours will usually be available at 0830 the following morning
3 & 4	$\frac{1}{2}$ internal	Overnight	Work will not be processed until after 1800 hours and will usually be available two hours from then or any later submittal time.
10	Normal	Approximately one to two hours depending on load. The service improves appreciably after 1800 hours as this priority takes precedence over lower priorities.	

* No guarantee can be given that these levels of service will be met. Your co-operation would be greatly appreciated.

3 EVENING CONSULTATIONS

For a two month trial period we provided evening consultations for two nights each week. The response was so low that we regret the continuation of this service could not be justified.

4 OFF-LINE STORAGE CHARGES

Our accounting system is suffering from some of the advantages of growth. Our current workload is double that of the equivalent period of last year. It will be some time before we can put resources into a review of the accounting system and reduce current workloads. We must look to areas where present overhead costs do not justify the costs of the collection of revenue. One such area is accounting for the costs of off-line storage. As a temporary measure, it has been decided not to charge for off-line storage as from Monday, 12th May.

5 FILE RECOVERY CHARGES

Although the Centre provides no guarantee of the security of files it does back up files stored in the public area and retrieves files for users who have lost them for one reason or another. The work involved in retrieving the files for users is considerable and unfortunately the stage has been reached when a charge must be levied to compensate in part for the resources used. As from the 1st June, 1975, a charge of \$5 will be levied for each file retrieved by the Centre on behalf of the users unless the loss was the fault of the Centre.

It may be helpful to mention the most frequent causes of loss by users.

- (a) Exceeding the logged-out quota on disk, particularly when running through batch. Logout has certain criteria to ensure quota adherence; these may not be your criteria, so make sure that the problem does not arise by managing your own disk area. This problem can be compounded by the failure to take precautions against error conditions in batch jobs.
- (b) Careless use of commands particularly the delete command with wild characters in commands i.e. .DELETE *.MAC
- (c) The creation of multiple batch jobs without proper precautions regarding inter-job dependency. Thus if two jobs are submitted to batch, it cannot be determined (unless precautions are taken) which will be processed first and it is extremely unwise in such a situation to use commands such as .DELETE *.REL without careful consideration of the implications.
- (d) Failure to use the /DISPOSE:RENAME is likely to cause the queue request to fail because the structure may not be mounted when the request is serviced.

6 MANUALS AVAILABLE FROM THE PRENTICE COMPUTER CENTRE

TM23 which outlines the manuals held by the Computer Centre for sale is available on request at the enquiry window.

7 BMD - TIME SERIES ANALYSIS

7.1 The James Cook University versions of BMD02T and BMD03T have been implemented on the PDP-10 and are available for use on the STA:directory.

BMD02T enables the computation of the autoconvariance, power spectrum, cross-convariance, cross spectrum, transfer function and coherence function of time series.

BMD03T estimates auto-spectra, cross-spectra, and coherences for stationary time series. Linear trend is removed from each series before transformation and if desired the series may be prefiltered and decimated before detrending. For further information regarding input data specifications and the output available, refer to the BMD Manual printed by the University of California Press.

7.2 The run procedures for BMD02T and BMD03T are as for the BMD programs previously available, however, BMD02T requires 35K of ocre for execution and hence can only be run after 6.00 pm.

8 MULTICHOICE TEST ANSWER PACKAGE (EVAL)

The Centre's attention has recently been drawn to the fact that some problems have been experienced in the use of the Multichoice Test Answer package (EVAL). The basic cause of these problems is the inaccuracy of printing and marking of the Optical Mark answer cards used with this system. In particular, it has been noticed that the cards available from the University Store were not produced according to the specifications for the Centre's Optical Card Reader and have very wide constraints which give inaccurate results. Some alignment problems found with the original cards produced by the Centre can also give marginal conditions.

Modifications have been made to both the optical card reader and the reader software to improve the accuracy of optical mark reading. Tests are being conducted with both the above card types and the results of these will be published as soon as they are complete. Eventually, the problem will be overcome by redesigning and producing a more accurate card.

In the meantime all users of EVAL are advised to ensure that cards are marked in the constraints with a single mark extending just beyond each constraint. e.g.

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All results must be thoroughly checked for accuracy.

9 DELETION OF NON-ESSENTIAL OFF-LINE FILES

During the weekend of 24/25 May a cleanup of the off-line file storage system will be undertaken. From an examination of the nature of the files in the off-line system, it is clear that a large amount of 'garbage' has accumulated primarily through a failure of users to exercise control over their disk areas. This large amount of non-essential file space has increased the size of the off-line system to an undesirable extent with the result that the average response to requests is being adversely affected and an unreasonable amount of resources is being tied up in their storage.

Files of the following types will be deleted from off-line storage:-

- * .TMP
- * .LPT
- * .LST
- * .CRF
- * .PLT
- * .PTP
- * .CDP
- * .LOG

?JOB??	.CTL
DECK??	.*
O??	.CDR

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